

null
Daniele A Schoenauer 08/02/2006 08:13:17 AM From DB/Inbox: Daniele A Schoenauer

Cable
Text:

UNCLAS SENSITIVE MUSCAT 01183

SIPDIS
MUSCATCX:
ACTION: POLE
INFO: OMC DAO DCM AMB PAO POLM

DISSEMINATION: POLE
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:GGRAPPO
DRAFTED: POLE:BMGRIMM
CLEARED: PAO: RARBUCKLE

VZCZCATI683
PP RUEHC RUEHEE RUEHTV
DE RUEHMS #1183 2131317
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 011317Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6979
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0153

UNCLAS MUSCAT 001183

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/RA, NEA/PPD, INR/R/MR

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [MU](#)
SUBJECT: TFLE01: OMAN CONDEMNS ISRAELI ACTIONS, CALLS FOR
IMMEDIATE CEASE-FIRE

REF: A. MUSCAT 1174
[1](#)B. MUSCAT 1173

[1](#)1. (U) On July 31, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement condemning Israel's airstrikes in Qana, characterizing the actions as a "massacre." Extending its "heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the bereaved families of victims of ongoing military actions," the statement further condemned the "tragedies and calamities" affecting civilians in other parts of Lebanon and Palestine. The statement called for an immediate cease-fire and urged the international community to utilize previously agreed upon resolutions and accords to resolve the root causes of the conflict in "a fair way that takes into account the importance of applying equitable criteria."

[1](#)2. (U) In concert with the Ministry's statement, the media's August 1 reporting on the crisis was more muted than that of July 31. Absent front-page coverage of children killed by the Qana airstrikes, the Lebanese crisis shared top billing in the papers with routine stories of government meetings and personnel appointments. Private English daily "Times of Oman" (circulation 25,000) even carried news of Muscat's cloudy weather under the subliminal front page header, "Muscat Mellows."

[1](#)3. (U) Editorials continued to sharply criticize U.S. support for Israeli actions. Under the banner, "Abetting Murder," Private English daily "Oman Tribune" (circ. 8,000) chastised U.S. indifference to Israel's use of American-supplied weapons. The Arabic daily "al-Watan," (circ. 42,000) sister to the "Tribune," also ran an opinion piece questioning the

sincerity of U.S. government condolences, remarking that the Secretary "has shed crocodile tears for the killings of

SIPDIS

hundreds of Lebanese civilians, but then immediately joins hands with that of Israel blessing its brutal atrocities."

¶4. (U) Balancing such emotionally-charged rhetoric, "al-Watan" congratulated the Ministry for its call to wisdom and logic in resolving the crisis. Focusing on possible resolutions to the crisis, the "Times" ran an opinion piece from Arab American Institute President James Zogby on the need to enfranchise Lebanon's Shia community. The "Times" also ran an article from "Washington Post" reporter Peter Baker on the geopolitical ramifications of the Lebanese crisis on U.S.-Arab relations.

¶5. (U) Meanwhile, Internet chat site Sablah continued to buzz with calls to demonstrate Israeli actions in Lebanon. Most of the 100-plus respondents agreed to participate in peaceful demonstrations, while a few suggested burning U.S. and Israeli flags or joining a Jihad.

¶6. (SBU) Comment. After a spate of negative press reporting the day after the Qana strikes, the media appear to have taken a cue from the Ministry's call to find a reasoned solution to the crisis to moderate their coverage, though less graphic pictures of displaced civilians remain in the middle sections of the papers. While strongly denouncing Israeli actions, the Ministry's carefully-worded statement avoided specific reference to the U.S. through its call to the international community to resolve the conflict through already-established diplomatic means. The statement, which has set the tone for future Omani press reporting, seems to have struck the Ministry's preferred balance alluded to in reftel A.

GRAPPO